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ABSTRACT

The diverse histories of the public libraries in the towns of Bonne Terre, Desloge, Farmington, Flat River, and Leadwood (Missouri) are presented. Each library is examined individually from its inception through its first few years of existence. Emphasis is placed not only on the tasks undertaken by the newly formed libraries but also on the successful struggle of each and the relationship between it and the people served. A brief history of the area precedes the history of the libraries. Newspapers, library records, and personal correspondence were sources for the study; newspapers provided the bulk of the information. The paper encompasses both external and internal forces which affected the libraries or the communities. The historical approach to each library is taken, rather than a comparison of the institutions included in the survey.
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THE COMMON DENOMINATOR: HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES
IN ST. FRANCOIS COUNTY, MISSOURI

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THE COMMON DENOMINATOR: HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES
IN ST. FRANCOIS COUNTY, MISSOURI

V. LONNIE LAWSON

ABSTRACT

St. Francois County is located in the northern portion of Southeast Missouri. The growth and development of the county paralleled that of the enormous lead mining operation located there. Each city in the county, with the exception of Farmington, evolved as a direct result of lead mining. However, the histories of the public libraries in the towns of Bonne Terre, Desloge, Farmington, Flat River and Leadwood are as diverse as the circumstances surrounding each one's conception. Until now, a scholarly and comprehensive study of this subject has not been undertaken. Therefore no one, including the public libraries in the county, had a considerable amount of information pertaining to the origins of those institutions.

Bonne Terre Memorial Library came into being in the latter part of the nineteenth century under the auspices of J. Wyman Jones, President of the St. Joseph Lead Company. The public library in Farmington was organized in 1915 by the Daughters of the Confederacy as a "reading and rest room" for the young men and "fraternal" clubs of that city. The public libraries in Desloge, Flat River and Leadwood originated in the 1930's. However, the Desloge Public Library was a WPA project, while the libraries in Flat River and Leadwood resulted from community projects.

Enormous problems faced each library in the beginning. These difficulties ranged from finances to lack of housing. Again the obstacles confronting the libraries differed from city to city. This paper not only attempted to focus on the tasks undertaken by the newly formed libraries, but also showed the successful struggle of each and the relationship between it and the people served.

This study made use of three main sources: newspapers, library records and personal correspondence between the writer and the librarian of the libraries concerned. Much of the text was derived from newspaper articles printed at the time of the events. Most library records have been destroyed or lost, thus preventing the scrutiny of valuable documents in order to reconstruct important events. Personal correspondence was beneficial in the initial research; but proved useless unless the information given could be verified.

Research for each of the public libraries discussed began with the original organization of the library, and carries through the first few years. A brief history of the area precedes the histories of the libraries. This paper encompasses both external and internal forces which affected the libraries or the communities. The historical approach to each library was taken, rather than a comparison of the institutions included in the survey.

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PREFACE

An in-depth study of the public libraries in St. Francois County has never been undertaken. Therefore no one, including the public librarians in the county, has any considerable amount of information pertaining to the origins of those institutions. Correspondence between the writer and the librarians of the four libraries treated in this paper provided enough information to begin research. However, because of its inadequacy or because of errors in the material provided, only the information which could be verified was used in this paper.

This paper developed using three sources: newspapers, library records and personal correspondence. The latter two sources were used primarily to obtain leads which could be verified by consulting the newspapers. Those area newspapers examined were the Democrat-Register (Bonne Terre), Bonne Terre Star, Farmington News, Farmington Times, and the Lead Belt News.

The main text of this work, except for material on the Bonne Terre Memorial Library, was derived from newspaper articles printed at the time of the events. Almost all library records have been destroyed or lost, thus preventing the scrutiny of valuable documents in order

to reconstruct important happenings. Libraries located in towns having newspapers were not difficult to research. However, in researching the Desloge Public Library and the Leadwood Public Library, problems arose because of the lack of a town paper. Newspapers located in neighboring towns were utilized for information.

Several people aided in completing this work. Dr. C. Edward Carroll, my advisor, has exhibited continuous optimism from the beginning. Staff members at the State Historical Society of Missouri saved much time by locating or obtaining materials. The librarians in St. Francois County, Laura Massie, Catherine Hager, Lucie S. Jakobe, and Marie Edgar, were more than helpful in providing assistance in getting the research underway. Thanks are also expressed to Jerry J. Clements, St. Joe Minerals Corporation, for assisting in my research. Special thanks go to my family for allowing many hours of their time so that I could research and write this paper.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

St. Francois County, appropriately included in the Lead Belt because of its vast mineral deposits, especially lead, lies in the northern portion of Southeast Missouri. On December 19, 1821, the state legislature created the county by a state law, making it Missouri's ninth county. Various parts of Ste. Genevieve, Jefferson and Washington counties were combined to form the new unit. It was divided into eight townships: Big River, Marion, Perry, Randolph, St. Francois, Iron, Pendleton, and Liberty. The first census taken in 1830 showed a population of 2,366.¹ The development of this area coincided with the expansion of the mining industry, with lead being the principal mineral in its prosperity.

Today there exist five public libraries in St. Francois County: Desloge, Bonne Terre, Farmington, Flat River and Elvins.² These institutions serve a population

¹Bob McHenry, ed., A Living History of Flat River, Elvins, Desloge, Farmington (Marceline, Mo., 1953), p.110.

²Reference to the Elvins Public Library was made in the Lead Belt News in 1937. However, that was the only indication found that the library did exist. No other reference could establish when or how that institution began. Therefore it has been excluded from this paper.

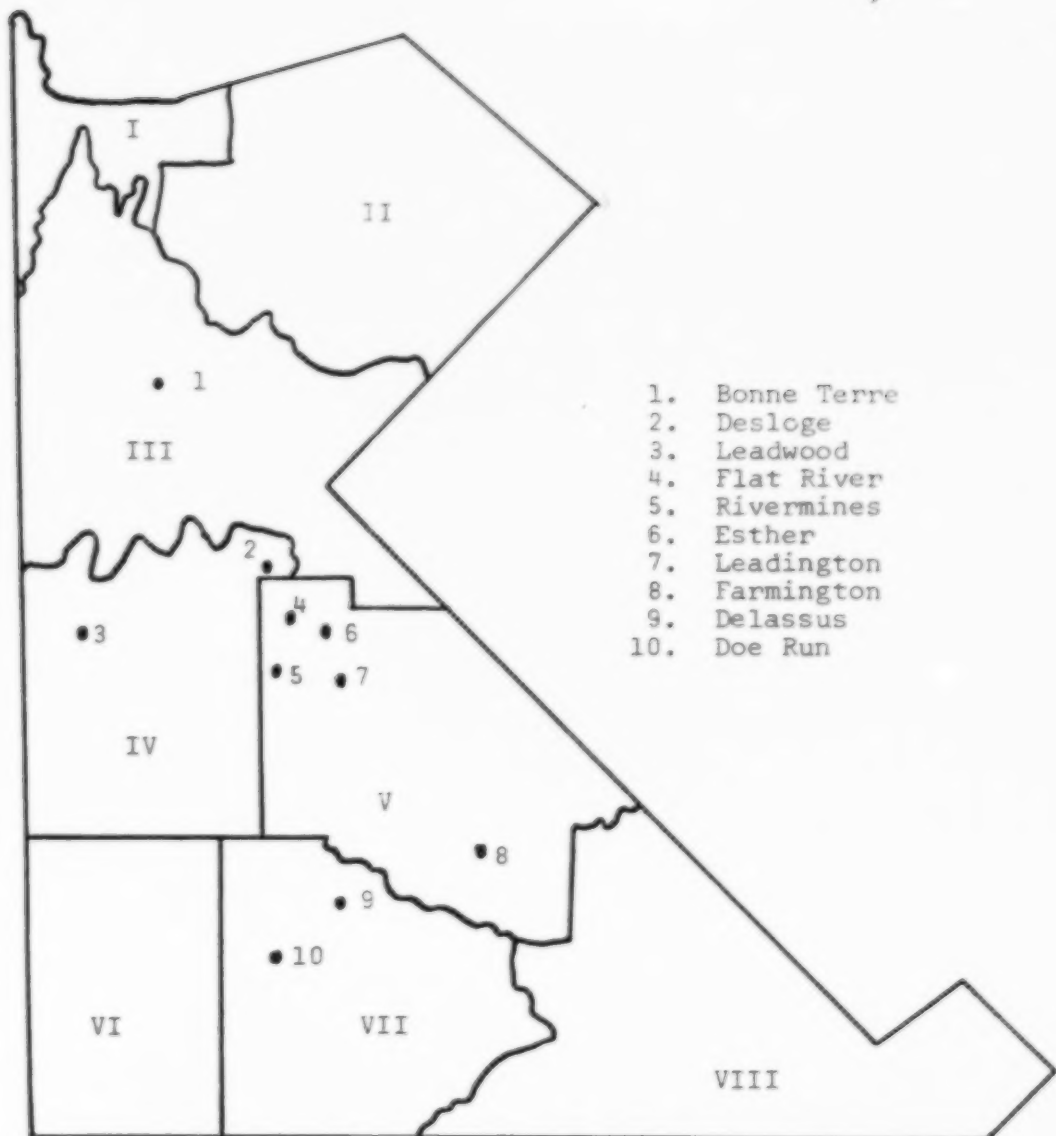
A Map of Missouri, denoting the
relationship of St. Francois County
to the rest of the state.



MAP OF ST. FRANCOIS COUNTY

The map on the following page is a contemporary map of St. Francois County, showing the townships and the major cities. Most of the smaller mining communities have since been incorporated into the cities which exist today.

This map is a reproduction of the Missouri State Highway Department's map of St. Francois County located in the County Clerk's office.



1. Bonne Terre
2. Desloge
3. Leadwood
4. Flat River
5. Rivermines
6. Esther
7. Leadington
8. Farmington
9. Delassus
10. Doe Run

- I. Big River
- II. Marion
- III. Perry
- IV. Randolph

- V. St. Francois
- VI. Iron
- VII. Pendleton
- VIII. Liberty

of 8,971, or 24.3 percent of the total population of the county. Therefore, only those people who live in the immediate area of one of these libraries are adequately serviced. At present the county has no cooperative library program to serve the remaining 75.7 percent of the residents.³

According to the data gathered by the State Library on the "Jefferson County Area," which includes St. Francois and six other counties, there is a marked difference between this area and the rest of the state. The information states that:

Library resources for this area are extremely limited with a total of 264,779 volumes reported and a total of 37.33 persons working in the eleven existing academic and public libraries and 70 persons working in school libraries.

Parts of this area are closely related to the St. Louis metropolitan area and some of the citizens may depend on the library resources in the St. Louis area. However, until the 114,140 (56.1%) people in this area vote to support public library service, this must be considered an extremely deprived area as far as library service is concerned. Both unserved counties with growing populations and continually increasing assessed valuation should be able to easily support public library programs.⁴

³Missouri, State Library, Analysis of Resources of Missouri Libraries and Needs Assessment (Preliminary draft, revised), 1976, pp. 39-40.

⁴Ibid., p. 40.

CHAPTER II

BONNE TERRE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

The Bonne Terre Memorial Library came into being in the latter part of the nineteenth century under the auspices of J. Wyman Jones, President of the St. Joseph Lead Company.¹ The date for the actual beginning is not known, however the time is generally believed to be sometime in the late 1860s or early 1870s. At that time Jones (and possibly Dr. C. B. Parsons) transferred part of his personal library collection to one of the offices of the St. Joseph Lead Company so that employees and other citizens of the area would have access to them.²

The collection grew because Jones "often brought books from New York, so people would have good reading material."³ Other contributors were the directors and the stockholders of the company, who met at annual meetings in Bonne Terre.⁴

¹J. Wyman Jones founded the St. Joseph Lead Company in 1865 and continued as its President until his death on October 27, 1904.

²St. Francois Daily Journal [Flat River], June 11, 1968, p. 4 and Daily Journal [Flat River], March 23, 1973, p. 1.

³Ibid., June 11, 1968, p. 4.

⁴St. Francois Daily Journal, March 23, 1973, p. 1.

As the collection outgrew the small room in which it was housed, a new home was sought. In the early 1880s the library was moved into two rooms in a building on company grounds. One of the two rooms was used to hold the collection, while the second was used as a reading room, providing magazines and newspapers for the readers.⁵

The next building to be used for the library was the Natatorium. Miss Della Rainey, Miss Ada Kirkpatrick and Misses Lena and Anna Kuchlin took turns as librarians in the early history at the Natatorium, and kept the library open every day except Sunday. The library remained at this site until shortly after the death of J. Wyman Jones in October, 1904.⁶

Upon the death of his father, Dwight Jones assumed the leadership of the lead company. With this position also came the responsibility as head of the library. In honor of his father, Dwight took his own money and built a building to be the final home of the Bonne Terre Memorial Library. He also helped organize the Bonne Terre Memorial Library Association, which was granted a State charter in January, 1905.⁷

⁵St. Francois Daily Journal, June 11, 1968, p. 4 and March 23, 1973, p. 1.

⁶Ibid., June 11, 1968, p. 4.

⁷Daily Journal, March 23, 1973, p. 1.

In November, 1905, Dwight Jones gave the newly completed building to the library association. A picture of J. Wyman Jones was placed over the mantel in one of the rooms, and his widow donated a grandfather clock.⁸

The St. Joseph Lead Company took over the support of the library, including the salaries of the librarian and janitor.⁹ "In addition St. Joe has made contributions of time and labor to finance repairs and redecorating."¹⁰

In essence, J. Wyman Jones was the originator and inspiration of the library at Bonne Terre. As the plaque inside the library states, he truly was "A Friend of the People of this Community."¹¹

⁸St. Francois Daily Journal, June 11, 1968, p. 4.

⁹Based on personal correspondence between Mrs. Lucie S. Jakobe, librarian of the Bonne Terre Memorial Library, and the author.

¹⁰Daily Journal, March 23, 1973, p. 1.

¹¹Personal correspondence between Lucie S. Jakobe and the author.

CHAPTER III

FARMINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The United Daughters of the Confederacy organized the humble beginning of the Farmington Public Library in July, 1915. A program consisting of music and readings was scheduled to be given on Friday, July 30. A general admission of ten cents was charged, with the money to be used as an initial fund for a public library. At this time the United Daughters of the Confederacy stated that other similar programs would be performed for the same purpose.¹

The Christian Church was the site for the next meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy on Tuesday evening, August 17. At this meeting the club "took the initiative in an attempt to provide a reading and rest room in the Tetley building, where young men may go in the evening and spend an hour or two in pleasant and instructive recreation; and to which were invited the ministers of the various churches, the Mayor and others of the city officials, the superintendents and principals of the schools and colleges, the chairmen and presidents

¹The Farmington Times, July 23, 1915, p. 1.

of the Business Men's Club and of other commercial, social and fraternal associations of the city."²

A financial committee consisting of Mayor E. J. McKinney, Mrs. B. H. Marbury, Mrs. T. C. Young, Mrs. Sam Tetley, and Mrs. Harry Dobbins was selected to obtain money for the purpose of buying furniture and providing maintenance of the reading room.³

The next major meeting was held at the high school building on October 19. The Board of Education offered some rooms in the high school building to serve as the new library to representatives of the social and religious organizations that had gathered there. A decision was made at this time to hold another meeting in one week with people from each local church, social and philanthropic organization to serve as part of the library board. Before leaving when the meeting adjourned, the participants took a tour of the area to be used as the library.⁴

On March 14 of the next year (1916) a book shower was held in the library rooms from three to five o'clock in the afternoon, and from seven-thirty to nine in the evening. Those attending the affair were to bring one

²Farmington Times, August 20, 1915, p. 1.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., October 22, 1915, p. 1.

or more books or some money and acquaint themselves with the facilities of the new library. The Library Board was quick to point out that only books of a high standard would be accepted, and that a selection guide to use was the list published by the Missouri Library Commission. A Board of Censors was established to decide which books would be deemed undesirable for the public's use.⁵

By the end of March nearly every preparation had been made for the library to be opened to the public. All materials had been cataloged and classified, and needed only checkout cards and pockets placed in the back of the books. Most of the books were for adults; however, there was a children's section set up with some books for youngsters. As soon as all minor details were taken care of, the library would be open to the patrons.⁶

No sooner had the library began, than it moved to a new location. On April 8, 1916, a meeting was called to decide on the move from the high school to the Tetley Building in a more centralized part of town. Another reason for the move was the fact that the high school building offered no supervision during the summer months. Again various representatives of various

⁵Farmington Times, March 10, 1916, p. 1.

⁶Ibid., March 31, 1916, p. 1.

organizations in Farmington attending the meeting. Monetary pledges were made to help pay for rent and other expenses which the new location might entail, estimated at about seven or eight hundred dollars per year for rent and salaries paid a librarian and janitor.⁷

The first list of books in the collection of the Farmington Public Library to be published in total appeared on page three of the April 21 issue of The Farmington Times. The entire list contained around one hundred and fifty books, broken into categories of biography, essays, fiction, history, letters, poetry, reference, religious, romance, travel and children's library. Some of the works listed included David Livingstone, Theodore Roosevelt, The Man, Romola, Mother, Last of the Mohicans, Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, Adventures of Kit Carson, The Poet's Poem, Life of Christ, Evenings With Grandma, Historical Plays for Children, and Little Colonel.⁸

Even before the Farmington Public Library was open to the public, a re-organization of the Library Association took place because of its inability to finance the library. Six trustees were elected to serve

⁷Farmington Times, April 14, 1916, p. 1.

⁸Ibid., April 21, 1916, p. 3.

as the Board of Managers for the library until the annual meeting at the beginning of the new year. Members of the Board were President, Mrs. E. G. Scrutchfield, 1st Vice President, Professor W. L. Johns; 2nd Vice President, Mrs. C. O. Nelson; Secretary, Clyde Morsey; Treasurer, Barney Pelty; Supervisor of the Library, Mrs. M. P. Cayce. Though the Board could not determine the number of days or hours the library would be open during the week, they did set up the following committees at this time: Committee in Charge of Receiving Books, Committee on Buildings and Grounds, and the Publicity Committee.⁹

By the beginning of May the library rooms at the Tetley Building had been decorated and all the moving had taken place. With completion of all decorations the library was opened to the public at this time.¹⁰ During the first month of business over one hundred library cards were issued and twenty books per day were checked out by readers. By July, over three hundred library cards had been handed out and the book collection had reached a total of six hundred and forty-five.¹¹

At the monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees in July, a decision was made to hold a pageant and

⁹Farmington Times, April 28, 1916, p. 1.

¹⁰Ibid., May 5, 1916, p. 1.

¹¹Ibid., July 14, 1916, p. 5.

homecoming in Farmington to gather funds for the library. The dates chosen to have the pageant were September 14 to the 16, and the place selected was the Athletic Field at the Ozark Business College. Tickets were set at one dollar for adults and sixty cents for children under fourteen. The whole community was enthusiastic about the affair and much work and preparations were carried out to make the event a successful one.¹²

On opening night the pageant exhibited the birth and history of the state of Missouri by presenting seven separate scenes depicting various historical stages from Indian life to the future of Farmington. Almost two hundred men, women and children took part in displaying the history to the audience. The second evening of the affair was highlighted by a concert, which drew a record breaking crowd of over two thousand people. The evening of the pageant was a restaging of the historic scenes given the first night.¹³

The pageant proved successful, not only in attendance and gaiety, but in profit. The net profit came to two hundred and thirty-five dollars. Two thirds

¹²Farmington Times, July 14, 1916, p. 5; July 21, 1916, p. 1; July 28, 1916, p. 1; August 11, 1916, p. 1; and September 1, 1916, p. 1.

¹³Ibid., September 1, 1916, p. 1; September 15, 1916, p. 1; and September 22, 1916, p. 1.

went to the Farmington Public Library and one third went to the co-sponsor of the pageant, the Civic Club. The Library Board had decided to use its share to buy new books. The idea of having an annual pageant was best summed up by the Farmington Times when it stated that "the present Executive Committee [should] make the start to organize a permanent Pageant Club in preparation for next fall. People universally like to be entertained and the town that caters to the disposition does much for its own growth, progress, and prosperity."¹⁴ The next year the United States entered World War I and the idea of a pageant was gone as quickly as it had been conceived.

Between the years 1917 and 1920 very little appeared in the area newspapers pertaining to the Farmington Public Library. At the beginning of 1917 the Times carried an article stating that the library had on hand almost one thousand books and catered to a regular patronage of five hundred and fifty-nine. The paper ended the article by urging the citizens of Farmington to support the library in every way possible.¹⁵

In February, 1917, a new Board of Managers was elected consisting of Mrs. G. E. Scrutchfield, President;

¹⁴Farmington Times, December 1, 1916, p. 1.

¹⁵Ibid., January 5, 1917, p. 1.

W. L. Johns, First Vice President; Clyde Morsey, Second Vice President; Mrs. Anna Lloyd, Secretary; J. H. Tetley, Treasurer; and Mrs. M. P. Cayce, Supervisor. To get more people involved with the library, the board "invited" all residents in the county to pay one dollar and become a member of the Farmington Public Library Association.¹⁶

The library was doing business as usual during the war years. One incident to reflect the usage of the library by area residents was an unfortunate happening in which a young thirteen year-old girl, Frankie Boyer, was struck by lightning while returning home after visiting the library. Her injuries were minor and she recovered after being temporarily paralyzed.¹⁷

The library collection grew rapidly during the first half of 1917; with the total amount reaching one thousand six hundred and sixteen books.¹⁸

The third building to house the Farmington Public Library was the Farmers Bank building, which became the new home on April 3, 1920. The library had grown to over three thousand volumes and the board, in trying to keep the library up-to-date, appropriated sixty dollars

¹⁶Farmington Times, February 2, 1917, p. 5.

¹⁷Ibid., May 25, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁸Ibid., June 8, 1917, p. 3.

more for books in June of that year.¹⁹

The beginning of 1921 saw the re-election of two board members, Mrs. Harry Denman and W. L. Johns, for a three year term. The Treasurer's report stated that the library fund had a balance of one hundred dollars. The Secretary's report produced some good news concerning the previous year; sixty-eight books had been purchased, eight hundred and thirty-one books had been donated, two hundred and sixty-nine membership cards were issued, and the number of books checked out totaled over six thousand.²⁰

During March of the same year, plans were being made to erect a new building in Farmington which would become the present home of the Farmington Public Library.²¹ The Long Memorial Building would serve as a tribute to William Dubart Long, pioneer of Farmington who had recently died in Canada. The library room in the new building would measure seventeen by twenty-two feet, and would "contain six large windows insuring plenty of light for its patrons and will have book cases, counters, etc."²²

The entire cost of the building was to be paid by the widow of Mr. Long. Shortly after the news of the

¹⁹Farmington Times, April 9, 1920, p. 1; and June 4, 1920, p. 1.

²⁰The Farmington News, January 14, 1921, p. 1.

²¹Ibid., March 4, 1921, p. 1.

²²Ibid., August 5, 1921, p. 1.

Long Memorial Building reached Farmington, Long's widow, Mrs. Bisby, died. However she had provided for the building in her will.²³

The end of 1921 brought the news that almost eleven thousand books had been checked out of the library for that year. Three hundred and sixty-eight new readers were issued library cards, book donations reached two hundred and five, and sixty-five new books were purchased. Mrs. M. P. Cayce and E. J. McKinney were elected new board members for the next three years.²⁴

The week of February 12, 1922, was designated by Governor Hiram Lloyd as Missouri Book Week. The Missouri Library Association sponsored the event to promote and made people aware of the need for public libraries, since eighty-nine counties in the state were without a free library. The Farmington Public Library held open house the entire week and everyone was urged to visit the library and donate books for others to use.²⁵

To encourage people to use the library, the Farmington News printed a paper entitled "What the Public Library Has Done for Us" by a fifth grade student named

²³The Farmington News, April 8, 1921, p. 1.

²⁴Ibid., January 13, 1922, p. 1.

²⁵Ibid., February 10, 1922, p. 1.

Leo Dugal.²⁶ Leo wrote:

The Public Library has helped us in several things. It has helped us for one thing, it lets us have books to read, and we help it by giving some books to it about once every year. We can go there and sit at the big table and read books and look at magazines. We get lots of information out of them. We can learn lots of things. When we have a lesson that we don't know much about, we can find out some things in the Public Library books. We also have a Library Campaign every year. Each school in the city tries to see which school can give the most books. I think a lot of the Public Library. Because we don't only get good information out of the books, we learn how to read, speak clearly and express our thoughts in apt, simple words. I selected a book the other day at the library about the American Pioneers. It contained stories of Daniel boone, Lewis and Clark, Fremont and Kit Carson and from it I received lots of information. Each school child should have a membership card at the Public Library. Not only school children enjoy the freedom of our library but I have seen gray haired men and women selecting them a book to read.²⁷

Library Week in Farmington proved fruitful in both visitors and in donated books. The whole community seemed to become involved. The high school, grade school, Women's Clubs and other interested residents helped to gather and present to the library a total of seven hundred books. These new donations pushed the total collection to over four thousand.²⁸

²⁶Today Mr. Dugal is a prominent businessman in Farmington.

²⁷Farmington News, February 10, 1922, p. 1.

²⁸Ibid., February 24, 1922, p. 1.

In April of 1922, the voters of Farmington voted on an issue which had never been proposed before. The proposal was a four-tenths mill tax to be used to support the library. There was no major opposition to the tax which passed by a five-to-one majority. The vote by each ward is as follows:

	1	2	3	4	Total
For Library Tax	35	236	82	39	392
Against Library Tax	5	43	17	4	69 ²⁹

Since the city of Farmington now supported the public library, some provision had to be made to appoint a Board of Directors. This was done on Monday, June 5. W. L. Johns, J. H. Tetley, E. J. McKinney, W. R. Lang, G. B. Snider, Mrs. Ed Helber, Mrs. M. P. Cayce, Mrs. Harry Denman and Miss Marian Giessing were appointed to the board.³⁰

Even though the library was now under the control of the city of Farmington, the Shaw Concert Company of the Lyric Chautauqua System was asked to give a performance for the benefit of the library, until funds could be transferred at the beginning of the fiscal year.³¹ For

²⁹Farmington News, April 7, 1922, p. 1.

³⁰Ibid., June 9, 1922, p. 1.

³¹Ibid., August 25, 1922, p. 1.

the period from July 1, 1922 to January 1, 1923 the city transferred three hundred and twenty-two dollars to the Library Fund.³² For the first six month period in 1924 the funds transferred deminished to only one hundred twenty-five dollars and nineteen cents.³³

The actual work on constructing the Long Memorial Building did not begin until July, 1923. The first thing that needed to be done was to tear down the Weber building, which was standing on the ground selected for the Long building. This work was begun on July 9. Construction on the Long Memorial Building progressed throughout 1923 and 1924. Then in May, 1924, when completion was at hand, tragedy struck. A fire broke out and almost ten thousand dollars in damage resulted. Insurance covered the loss; however, it was estimated that it would take nearly two months to repair the damage and complete the building.³⁴

Just prior to the opening of the Long Memorial Building, the News published the following information about the Library Fund.

³² Farmington News, February 9, 1923, p. 7.

³³ Ibid., August 15, 1924, p. 7.

³⁴ Ibid., July 13, 1923, p. 1; and May 2, 1924, p. 1.

Receipts

Amount in Treasury Jan. 1, 1924 . . \$725.85
 Amount from [city] General Fund . . 125.19

Expenditures

Farmers Bank	42.00
Miss Ruby Sutton	210.00
Bank of Farmington	13.46
Mrs. Edw. Helber	41.39
J. H. Tetley	6.67
O. W. Bleeck	8.45
Balance	\$529.07 ³⁵

The evening of October 31, 1924, was the formal dedication of the Long Memorial Building. The program for that event was as follows:

Song, "America"	by Audience
Invocation	Rev. J. Kerr
Vocal Solo	Tom Miles
Addresses . .W. H. Hunt, Dubart Long Wilson and Professor W. L. Johns	
Prayer	Rev. F. P. Jernegan
Song, "Auld Lang Syne"	by Audience
Benediction	Rev. Fr. F. Skaer ³⁶

Along with the article on the opening of the Long Memorial Building, the News carried this notice. "The Public Library has been moved into its new quarters in the Long Memorial Building. Fines will be effective

³⁵ Farmington News, August 15, 1924, p. 7.

³⁶ Ibid., October 31, 1924, p. 1.

after November 1st on books not returned on schedule time."³⁷ The library was indeed open for business.

³⁷Farmington News, October 31, 1924, p. 1.

CHAPTER IV

DESLOGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Desloge Library Association was organized sometime around the beginning of March, 1934, and plans were immediately made to build a library. The first members of the Desloge Library Board were C. S. Bryan, George Faber, T. E. Ruffing, Mrs. J. W. Highley, Mrs. H. R. Stahl, and Mrs. R. B. Lester.¹

The final decision for the construction and completion of the library building were completed (finished) in the Fall of that year. T. E. Ruffing, Fred W. Fuhrmeister, and Mrs. Margaret C. Lester were named building trustees, and W. B. Massey donated bricks from the Fraternal building which had burned the year before. A building site was provided when the National Lead Company gave the Association the deed to a piece of property in the city.²

Even though the library building would not be a reality for some time, the board prepared to increase

¹Lead Belt News, March 16, 1934, p. 2.

²Ibid., March 16, 1934, p. 1; October 26, 1934, p. 1; and Leadwood Press, July 30, 1937, p. 1.

the library fund by staging a play. Arrangements were made for the return of a locally born actress, Frances Dale, to appear in a comedy titled "Nancy's Private Affair." Miss Dale had previously worked for Warner Brothers Pictures and the George M. Cohan stage company.³

In order to get the whole community involved in the money-making venture, the cast was to be made up of area residents. Auditions were given and the cast members chosen by Miss Dale were Dr. D. S. Lockhart, Mrs. Tim Daugherty, Mrs. Roy Carter, Miss Dorothy Laws, Miss Elizabeth Hibbits and Harry O. Ward. The big event was to be presented on November 15 in the high school auditorium, and the charge for admission was twenty-five cents for adults and ten cents for children.⁴

The turnout by area citizens greatly helped the newly established library fund. Even after all expenses were paid, the play netted sixty dollars for the fund.⁵

In November, 1935, the Works Progress Administration approved twenty-eight work projects, including the library, in St. Francois County. About nineteen hundred people were put to work on these projects, with

³Lead Belt News, October 26, 1934, p. 1.

⁴Ibid., November 2, 1934, p. 1.

⁵Ibid., November 23, 1934, p. 1.

salaries from thirty-two to thirty-eight dollars per month. Work began on November 27.⁶

Of the projects accepted by the WPA, the Lead Belt News maintained that some were not approved by the community. No indication was given as to what projects were approved, but the newspaper stated:

A great many of the projects are not those that are preferred by the local people. It was necessary, in order to put people to work, to accept such projects as were sent to us [District WPA Office]. The main purpose was to build the projects around the available labor. In some cases it was impossible to do this. There are many worthy projects which the district office hopes to be able to start at a later date, but it has not been assured that it will receive any additional allotment of money, at least until after the first of the year.⁷

Regardless of whether each project was commended by the residents, by December 9 work was begun and seventeen hundred and twenty-two people had been employed. Over three hundred thousand dollars had been appropriated for the jobs, with \$10,468 going to build the Desloge Library.⁸

Construction on the library building took more than one and one-half years. In July, 1937, the library

⁶Lead Belt News, November 22, 1935, p. 1.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., December 13, 1935, p. 1.

advertised that anyone offering books to the collection should contact Mrs. R. B. Lester or T. E. Ruffing.⁹ In August the librarian, Paul Hutchings, announced that the Desloge Public Library was open from nine o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon. Over five hundred books and magazines had been readied, with more being prepared and cataloged. The library board thanked Mrs. A. P. Goodin, Mrs. J. W. Highley, Mrs. W. P. Glessing, Mrs. J. W. Houser, Mrs. L. M. Reaves, Mrs. Clyde Voyles, Joe Kusman, Mrs. Roy French, Mrs. George Morris, Mrs. H. W. Huff, and Mrs. Lucille Bennett Cole for donations, and stated that donors of gifts were welcome to contact the library.¹⁰

Later that year the library had a benefit bridge and pinocle party to defray library expenses. The gathering took place on October 22, and twenty-five cents admission was charged.¹¹ Many people appeared at the happening and R. B. Watson, Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Jennings, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Clay, Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Poston, and Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Murphy not only attended, but brought book or magazine donations.¹²

⁹Lead Belt News, July , 1937

¹⁰St. Francois County Journal, August 12, 1937, p. 1; and Lead Belt News, August 13, 1937, p. 1.

¹¹Lead Belt News, October 15, 1937, p. 1.

¹²Ibid., October 29, 1937, p. 1.

A children's storytelling hour also made its appearance in October, 1937. On the 16th Mrs. Kathryn Rubottom told the story of the "Three Princesses On The Blue Mountains" to school children, and on the 20th she recited "Jack and the Bean Stalk" and "Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse" to preschool youngsters.¹³

A list of new books available at the Desloge Public Library appeared that Fall. Gone With The Wind headlined the list which also included Northwest Passage, Three Comrades, The Citadel, Life With Father, Golden Fleece, American Dream, and Recapture the Moon.¹⁴

The last money-making venture that the library sponsored that year took place on December 5, 6, and 7. The movie "Dodsworth," by Sinclair Lewis, was shown and the public was charged twenty-five cents per ticket, with the proceeds going to the library fund.¹⁵

With the help of the federal government and concerned citizens in the area, the Desloge Public Library had a sound base upon which to build.

¹³Lead Belt News, October 15, 1937, p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., November 5, 1937, p. 1; and December 3, 1937, p. 1.

CHAPTER V

FLAT RIVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

The conception of the Flat River Public Library came about in the Fall of 1934. In October of that year the Flat River Board of Education appointed an advisory board to aid the school administration in undertaking the task of developing a library. Members of local clubs and organizations were appointed to the Library Advisory Board. These members included Dean Deneke (chairman), Mary Myers (secretary), Lee Munger, Roy Coffman, Laura Nahm, the Reverend J. W. Keisker, Mrs. B. F. Murphy, Mrs. R. S. Brackman, Wesley Deneke, and W. H. Lemmel. The purpose of the board was to study the problems which might confront the new institution; including the selection of materials and choosing a librarian.¹

One problem the council did not have was obtaining a building to house the library. The Board was allowed the use of the first floor of the Flat River Home Economics Building. Not only did the Board of Education donate a structure, but it also consented to

¹Lead Belt News [Flat River], October 26, 1934, p. 1; and November 2, 1934, p. 1.

the installation of a tile floor and gave the material to build furniture to help decorate the room.²

The first major duty of the Library Advisory Board was to appoint a librarian. Their choice was Mrs. P. G. Keith. The members felt that Mrs. Keith had the experience and background to undertake such a job, and Mrs. Keith proved them right by acting immediately to visit libraries in Bonne Terre, St. Louis and Cape Girardeau to help her determine ways to improve service to the patrons. The funds to pay a librarian and an assistant librarian for the first year came from the Federal Relief and Reconstruction Commission. After the first year, the board hoped that the community would vote a library tax to totally support the library.³

Almost as soon as the idea of the library appeared, so to did the arrival of books, magazines and other materials for use in the library. Various organizations of the Flat River area began collecting materials and setting aside donations for use in buying up-to-date supplies. By the middle of November the collection had grown to over two hundred books, two sets of encyclopedias, and nearly one thousand magazines of thirty titles. Besides donation of materials, the

²Lead Belt News, October 26, 1934, p. 1; and November 30, 1934, p. 2.

³Ibid., November 2, 1934, p. 1.

Library Board began purchasing new materials, including subscriptions for more than forty current magazines.⁴

Enthusiasm by citizens for the success of the library was encouraging. The Flat River Junior College presented a play on December 25 to raise proceeds for the library. College students performed in the three act play entitled "Red-Headed Step Child." Miss Irene Bloom was the sponsor. A number of people became involved in this project. Many businessmen, teachers, and students participated by selling advanced tickets. The tickets were sold for ten and fifteen cents, and all the money was to be used for supplies and magazine subscriptions.⁵

Even before the official opening of the library on Wednesday, December 12, the doors were open to the patrons. On November 13 junior high school students invaded the library after school and checked out more than forty books. During the month of November Mrs. Keith worked in the library some mornings and afternoons, but the demand by the public was so great that by December 1 a regular schedule from eleven to five o'clock, every day except Sunday, had to be instituted.

⁴Lead Belt News, November 2, 1934, p.1; and November 16, 1934, p. 3.

⁵Ibid., November 16, 1934, p. 3; November 23, 1934, p. 1; and December 7, 1934, p. 1.

The Library Board met on November 21 and elected Mrs. Clyde Cunningham as assistant librarian, because the library was experiencing a user attendance of close to sixty people daily.⁶

The formal opening of the Flat River Public Library occurred at 7:30 p.m. December 12. One hundred people were present that evening, and the room was decorated for the occasion. Not only was the attendance of the opening a success, but some of those who came brought books and magazines to contribute. The program that evening, which included music and speeches, was as follows:

1. Will O' Wisp Wunne
Sing Me To Sleep Greene
Junior High Mixed Quartet
2. History of the Flat River
Public Library W. H. Lemmel
3. Acceptance of the
Library Mayor Lee Munger
4. Nightfall in Granada Bueno
Parade of the
Wooden Soldiers Jessel
High School Mixed Quartet
5. Instrumental music directed by R. M. Fowler⁷

Before the purchase of new books and magazines, the library functioned solely on the donations made by

⁶Lead Belt News, November 16, 1934, p. 3; November 30, 1934, p. 2; and December 7, 1934, p. 6.

⁷Ibid., December 7, 1934, p. 1.

the public. The Lead Belt News was quick to print the names of people making contributions with the numbers of books and magazines given. The following is a list of donors who helped to establish the library. The dates given indicate the day the newspaper printed the donation entries.

- November 23: Flat River Board of Education,
3 sets of encyclopedias
Sonny Keith, 50 books
Hilda Dannenberg, 35 books
- November 30: P. A. Haines, Set of Engineering
books
- December 7: C. R. Pratt, 94 books
- December 21: Mrs. William Karsch, 12 books
Miss Irene Bloom, 30 books
Tom Dempsey, 15 books
Reverend Harris, magazines
- January 4: Mrs. T. J. Stewart, 16 books
Leslie Jones, 6 books
Billy Beck, 2 books
Mary Burns, 91 books
Mrs. Hugh Wilson, 19 books
- January 18: Tom Horton, 2 books
Michael Potsileko, 5 books
Irma Cook, 4 books
Maud Underwood, 16 books
Harry Grigsby, 46 magazines
- January 25: Jack Boatright, 13 magazines
Marion Hughes, 5 books
James Sweesey, 1 book
Clyde Akers, 150 books
- April 26: Betty Kelly, 18 books
John and Eugene Williams, 16 books
Carl White, 2 books
Opal Dalton, 1 book

May 3: Reverend Harris, 18 books
 Billy Goggins, 3 books
 Anne Simpson, 5 books
 Pearl Divins, 2 books
 Beatrice Henry, 1 book
 John Margreiter, 8 magazines

By the end of 1934 the Lead Belt News began publicizing the large variety of magazines included in the library collection. Donated magazines were mentioned, and descriptions of some appealing articles were given. The new library was especially proud of the selection of magazines which would be offered to its patrons. Reference was made to the magazine orders which had already been paid for, and which were expected to be received shortly. These magazines included: Golden Book, Harper's Magazine, Popular Mechanic, Delineator, Liberty, Parents, Hygeia, Scientific American, Field and Stream, Sporting News, Survey Graphic, Good Housekeeping, National Geographic, Outlook, Current History, Review of Reviews, Atlantic Monthly, Time, Today, Saturday Evening Post, Reader's Digest, Nature, American Girl, Boys' Life, Ladies Home Journal, Scribner's Forum, New Republic, Nation, Pictorial Review, Pathfinder, Collier's American, Cosmopolitan, American Boy, St. Nicholas, Child Life, McCall's, Christian Century, and Current Science.⁸

⁸ Lead Belt News, December 21, 1934, p. 1.

By 1935 the library had a total collection of six hundred and seventy-six books. Also on hand were the new magazines that had been ordered. The new year brought forth a new policy of charging fines for overdue materials. A two cent penalty per day was charged to anyone who kept a book out longer than the one week allowed. Except for the overdue fine, the library was open to anyone who wished to use it, at no charge.⁹

Library hours were also changed in January, 1935. Monday through Friday the library doors were open from eleven o'clock in the morning till five o'clock in the afternoon; and in the evening from seven to nine o'clock. On Saturday the library was closed all day, but was open on Sunday from two to four o'clock.¹⁰

On February 8 the library announced a benefit bridge and pinochle party. The benefit was originally scheduled for Friday evening, February 22, but was later changed to Monday evening, February 25. Participants would be charged twenty-five cents per ticket to play. Attendance prizes were handed out to be taken home. However winners of the games would be awarded books, and the News stated that "those winning will have the honor of autographing and presenting them to the

⁹Lead Belt News, January 4, 1935, p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid., January 18, 1935, p. 5.

library."¹¹

Involvement in awareness of the governmental affairs of the New Deal was used as an enticement to get more people to use the library. Residents of the area were told that the library had the best collection of magazines and books to "bring what application they can to the questions of citizens' rights, capital, labor and the new moralities, now held before them by political leaders."¹²

A juvenile section was added to the Flat River Public Library in April, 1935. The department consisted of tables, chairs, and shelves containing about one hundred books for the little patrons. It proved to be so popular that the library began planning a story-telling hour several times a week for the children after the school year had ended.¹³

By Summer of 1935 the library had grown and developed much faster than many people had thought possible. Patrons were checking out an average of fifty books and twenty-five magazines per day. The total collection had increased to include "fourteen hundred and fifty books, more than fifteen thousand magazines,

¹¹Lead Belt News, February 8, 1935, p. 1; February 15, 1935, p. 1; and February 22, 1935, p. 1.

¹²Ibid., February 22, 1935, p. 1; and March 15, 1935, p. 6c.

¹³Ibid., April 5, 1935, p. 5; and May 3, 1935, p. 3.

fifty-five current magazines, seven weekly county papers and two daily papers, morning and evening."¹⁴ Toward the end of the summer the library boasted a membership of five hundred and fifty people from Flat River, Farmington, Elvins, Esther, Desloge, Leadwood and Boone Terre.¹⁵

As with a number of libraries, the Flat River Public Library began experiencing the loss of some articles, especially magazines, from its collection. To compensate for those missing magazines, which included Popular Mechanics, Pictorial, Delineator, Woman's Home Companion, Cosmopolitan, American Boy, Boys' Life and McCall's, they advertised in the newspaper asking that people donate personal copies to fill the void of those not returned.¹⁶ To secure those materials that the library could not afford to purchase, Mrs. Keith obtained books on loan from the Missouri Library Commission in Jefferson City. The Commission sent fifty books, which had to be returned in three months.¹⁷

In the Spring of 1936 the library possessed a

¹⁴Lead Belt News, May 3, 1935, p. 3; and June 7, 1935, p. 5.

¹⁵Ibid., September 20, 1935, p. 1.

¹⁶Ibid., August 23, 1935, p. 5.

¹⁷Ibid., February 21, 1936, p. 1.

record total of two thousand one hundred and fourteen books. However, the need was still felt to acquire new and better books. A book drive was set for the week of March 30 to April 4. The Flat River Public Library Board met on March 25 to make arrangements for the book drive. Members of the Women's Club were put in charge of house to house soliciting, while the Lion's Club covered the downtown area. Everyone who contributed to the cause received a Library Promotion Fund Card.¹⁸

Money also was collected by the solicitors and it was used to order twenty-eight new books for the library. This was the largest order for new books to be made by the librarian. Included in this order were such titles as Ethiopia A Pawn in European History, Mother, The Next Hundred Years, Mutiny on the Bounty, and Working My Way Around The World.¹⁹

During April the hours of the library were changed. The library was open everyday except Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and from 7:30 to 9:00 o'clock in the evening. On Saturday the hours were from 1 to 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The thinking behind the change in the schedule was to give working people a chance to use the recently acquired books obtained

¹⁸Lead Belt News, March 20, 1936, p. 1; and March 27, 1936, p. 1.

¹⁹Ibid., July 10, 1936, p. 1.

during the book drive. Two weeks later the library stated that seventy new books had been received.²⁰

The news of the need for more books attracted attention of people outside of the Flat River area. Benton Murphy of Texas and Melvin Boyd of California, both formerly of Flat River, sent contributions to the Public Library Fund.²¹

To aid the patrons in locating articles in magazines and pamphlets carried by the library, a vertical file was set up for the pamphlets, and the Abridged Reader's Guide was subscribed to.²²

Later in the Summer of 1936 the American Library Association put out a list containing twenty of the most widely read books in 1935. The Flat River Public Library announced that it had nine of the twenty. The library proudly listed those nine as Magnificent Obsession, Mutiny on the Bounty, Time Out of Mind, It Can't Happen Here, North to the Orient, Life With Father, One Hundred Million Guinea Pigs, Skin Deep, and Good Bye, Mr. Chips.²³ In November, the library was glad to

²⁰Lead Belt News, April 10, 1936, p. 1; and April 24, 1936, p. 2.

²¹Ibid., May 15, 1936, p. 1.

²²Ibid., June 12, 1936, p. 5.

²³Ibid., July 17, 1936, p. 1.

announce the acquisition of Gone With The Wind.²⁴

In December of 1936 the library executives requested the city of Flat River to take over control of the Public Library. A newly appointed library board was chosen at this time.²⁵ W. A. Deneke (chairman), T. Dempsey, Dr. E. Griffin, Dean Coyle, Irene Bloom, R. S. Brackman, Mrs. C. Mergentheimer, Roy Coffman, and the Reverend W. Keisker were selected as members of the new board. They met in May, 1937, to plan for the annual solicitation of funds. The board was hopeful that the money would help the library better serve its users. The board stated that "with improved economic conditions, this bigger and better service will be made possible."²⁶

It was also during this meeting that the board congratulated the two librarians, Mrs. Keith and Mrs. Cunningham, for the work they had done. They had guided the library through its formative years without any pay for almost one year of its two and one-half year history.²⁷

In the ensuing months, the public rallied again

²⁴Lead Belt News, November 13, 1936, p. 2.

²⁵Ibid., June 10, 1938, p. B-8.

²⁶Ibid., May 7, 1937, p. 1; and May 14, 1937, p. 1.

²⁷Ibid., May 14, 1937, p. 1.

with money and gifts to keep the library going. Benefits and card parties were also held so that funds and books could be collected.²⁸ As in the past, when the library needed help, many people who were interested in providing their community with an excellent choice of reading materials showed their concern by getting the job done.

²⁸Lead Belt News, November 19, 1937, p. 1; and April 1, 1938, p. 1.

CHAPTER VI

LEADWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Leadwood Mothers' and Patrons' Club announced in June, 1938, that plans were underway to open a library and reading room in the former office of the McClard Coal and Ice Company. At the time of the announcement the room was being remodeled and June 10 was the expected date for the library to be open.¹

Elsie Peirce was to be the librarian, and the WPA assisted the project by paying her wages. People were asked to contact Floyd Johnson or Mrs. J. B. Caviness to contribute or loan books or magazines to the library. Boy Scouts served as collectors when residents donated materials.²

On June 7 the St. Francois County Journal stated that the Leadwood Library would definitely open June 10 and be open every day between the hours of one and six o'clock.³

¹St. Francois County Journal, June 2, 1938, p. 1.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., June 7, 1938, p. 8.

Concerned citizens had already involved themselves in the project by contributing books and magazines, while Lumos Furniture Store and Mrs. Jake Goodman respectively loaned a table and some chairs to the cause.⁴

No figures were given as to the amount of materials collected by the library. However, the library claimed that patrons had checked out ninety books within the first week that the institution was in operation.⁵

Within ten days after the opening of the Leadwood Public Library, the library sponsors decided to begin a storytelling hour for the benefit of the area children. The Reverend M. G. Swart, pastor of the Rock Church of God, was scheduled to be the first storyteller on Tuesday, June 21. Children were asked to return every Tuesday thereafter to hear other church leaders present children's stories.⁶

The Leadwood Public Library was apparently off to a good start. But the library either kept a low profile or became non-existent shortly after its opening, because no articles concerning it appeared in area papers for more than a year after its beginning.

⁴St. Francois County Journal, June 7, 1938, p. 8.

⁵Ibid., June 16, 1938, p. 1.

⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Boone Terre Memorial Library came into being in the latter part of the nineteenth century due to the generosity of J. Wyman Jones, President of the St. Joseph Lead Company. The public library in Farmington was organized in 1915 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy to be a "reading and rest room" for the young men and "fraternal" clubs of that city. Public libraries in Desloge, Flat River and Leadwood developed in the 1930's. However, the Desloge Public Library was a W.P.A. project and the Flat River Public Library was a community project, while the library in Leadwood appeared to be a combination of both.

The libraries faced enormous problems in their beginnings. These difficulties ranged from financial burdens to inadequate housing and differed in magnitude from city to city. One common factor which each library could count on was the enthusiasm shown by the local residents.

The histories of the public libraries in the cities of Bonne Terre, Farmington, Desloge, Flat River, and Leadwood are as diverse as the circumstances

surrounding each one's beginning. Yet without one common denominator, interested and concerned citizens, none of the libraries would have survived.

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